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**THE
VOICE
OF THE
WORKER**

'That which is good for the working class I esteem patriotic . . .' *James Connolly*

THE DAINGEAN BOYS



O'DONNELL, A BOO



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BERNIE MCBVOY

BRENDAN HALLIGAN, T.D. former general secretary of the Labour Party, describes the Budget as a most attractive package. It is — until you unwrap it. The Income Tax “concessions” for the generality of those who are lucky enough to be working mean that they will have an extra 50p or, at the outside, £1.50, in their wage packets. Will it buy any more of the necessities of life? Unfortunately, no. Acceptance of the National Pay Agreement with its ceiling on rises means that pay totters along well behind the Irish rate of price-inflation which is now the highest in Europe.

Perhaps we are pipped here by a decimal point or two by Italy where they give you a few sweets instead of 5,10 or 20-litre notes in your change? The Italians, however, have rather more sunshine than we have and don't have to fork out £2.46 for a container of butane gas that cost less than £1 two and a half years ago when my zodiacal sign Scorpio, obviously suffering some deep *tristesse* from an interrupted syzygy with Venus, directed me back from exile.

But is it all bad? Of course not. Liam Cosgrave — he's the Taoiseach in case you don't realise it — says that no one need be poorer as a result of the Budget. To achieve this all you have to do is to stop eating and turn on butane gas only when you've finally picked the happy hunting ground of your dreams, your Ward Union land in the sky. Liam, on his salary alone, is better off by £38 a week as a result of Richie Ryan's “most attractive package”; it is a fair assumption that the reduction from a maximum 77 per cent to 60 per cent in the highest rate of Income Tax enriches him substantially through the enlargement of his investment income. Another £38 is not out of the question.

Other dynasts who will be laughing all the way to the bank are such outstanding patriots as Senator the Earl of Iveagh, Senator Paddy McGrath, the Beltons, the McInerneys, the Dan Ryans and, I must not forget, the Mayor of Limerick, Senator Russell, the guano heir whose donation of £500 to handicapped children was so unfortunately leaked to the Press at the time he took over from the Bookie's Runner.

Who else locally, apart from hotelkeepers, shopkeepers, bookmakers (where they don't evade Income Tax by putting in dockets on losers after they have had a bad — i.e. winning — day at the races), benefits substantially from Budget? Why none other than Mr. Irish-Ireland himself, Tom O'Donnell, T.D. Minister for the Gaeltacht. On his salary alone as a Minister his Budget bonus is about a (Connemara) pony a week, that's £25 plus the bonus for the Irish inflection on the hee-haw as his good friend and crony Steve Coughlan will tell you. Not bad; he won't be thinking of turning on the butane. When, sooner rather than later, he comes to solicit your votes you'll know why he too thinks the Budget is a most attractive package. My Irish is rusty but I think the voters might appropriately answer “moggarlai”.

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OF COURSE, O'Donnell is popular everywhere. Well, almost everywhere. It's a question of advertising; by arrangement with RTE his victory message is set to music every morning just before the 7.30 obeisance to the ancient Irish gods whose names as far as I can make out are De Luain, De Mairt, De Ceadoin and so on. It seems odd that despite O'Donnell's efforts, and millions of the taxpayers' money, these gods are still called Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday in the purlieus of Garryowen, Southill, Corbally and Castletroy. For his failure in this respect O'Donnell and his pony get a boo or two from me. The people on Clare Island, Inishbofin and Inishturk are also inclined to say boo to O'Donnell. They suffer as much from extravagant prices and natural hardships as the people on the Aran Islands but for reasons known only to

O'Donnell do not qualify for any Government grant. Mr. O'Grady, chairman of the Clare Island Development Committee, seems to think they are discriminated against because his island folk do not speak Irish as fluently or as frequently as Senator Russell and Steve Coughlan (I leave to one side your Euro T.D. Herbert-Scherbert, as he is busy on your behalf familiarising himself with phrases like *voulez-vous coucher avec moi ce soir?* and *o quel cul tu as!* — this latter vulgarly concertinaed into Oh! Calcutta). It is something you might usefully ask O'Donnell about.

It is important because if this language discrimination is extended it could apply to pronunciation and the rather flat accents of Clare and Limerick people could be used to deprive them further when packages, more or less attractive, are going around.

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THE FARMERS, we are told by Paddy Lane, your neighbouring ton of soil, stand to be ruined by the new budgetary taxes. Well, I've examined the Budget closely and I do not find any taxes on farmers as distinct from bricklayers, clerks, shop assistants, public servants and others. What, of course, Mr. Lane is squealing “extortion” about is the introduction of a handful, and only a handful, of his clients to Income Tax. But Income Tax is the most just tax of all; it is payable only on income. It is not, therefore, the injustice of the Budget that Lane has in mind, but the partial justice of it.

The cause of the squeal is neatly put in *The Autocrat at the Breakfast Table*, by Oliver Wendell Holmes: “Injustice is relatively easy to bear; what stings is justice”. No farmer under a valuation of £75 is called on to pay a penny Income Tax and the £75 limit effectively exempts a vast majority of farmers; they pay nothing, or very little, even when their wives are, say, teachers. It is the rest of the taxpaying population who should be screaming at the absolute injustice of these exemptions. The owner of a farm, valuation £30, which I visited in Clare last year, had half a bullock and three geese in his deep freeze and two children at university; he also had the *deontas* which paid for his car, his pints and his card-playing. I think he's lost the *deontas* now — and about time too — but he is better off than most people on PAYE. Neither Fine Gael nor Fianna Fail is suggesting that he might contribute to the upkeep of the Army, the Garda, or the Social Services exigent as they are. Farmers, like everyone else, should not squeal until they're hurt or discriminated against.

Of course, no one actually likes paying Income Tax. Last year, through a twist of the Ryan knife, I had to pay three lumps of Income Tax, in January and October, instead of the normal two. I resented it certainly but I accepted it without much demur; the Finance Minister said he needed the money and that was that. Farmers who are now to be put in a similar situation will have the consolation that their bundle of £20 notes (they don't deal in the lower denominations) is doing more good than if they had perhaps put it on Vullabulloo at the Junction races or Fairyhouse. As for the extra that Richie extracted from me, I might very well have spent it seeking exaltation in the bed of a Circassian beauty off the Place Pigalle with undoubted harm to my immortal soul, or so I'm told. Richie stopped that caper and doubtless it will be noted to his credit when he applies, in triplicate, to the Universal Accountant for admission to the Heaven we have been taught to believe in. I would have thought continued membership of criminal conspiracies like Fine Gael (or Fianna Fail) would mean automatic exclusion but perhaps they've changed the rules to suit the new Irish-Irelanders.

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TRUST Dr. Conor Cruise O'Brien re-enter the limelight in

the midst of all the bourgeois celebration of the Budget. Of course, he's right to raise the running sore of Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution. Budgets, really, are neither here nor there while much of the resources of this small country are devoted to stopping any extension of the national blood-letting that stems from the myth of the 32-county Republic claimed in the Constitution. At the Gresham Hotel meeting at which Dr. O'Brien hammered home his demand for the repeal of this moonshine of the dreadful de Valera there was half-hearted support from Senator Mary Robinson and the Rev. Prof. Enda McDonagh. Senator Robinson said that a Constitution should reflect the fundamental aspirations of a people but she failed to grasp the whole nettle by saying as I would have done if the chairman Michael O'Leary, T.D., Minister for Labour, had allowed me to catch his eye, that a 32-county Republic is the aspiration of people in the 26 Counties *with this caveat*: these people want a 32-county Republic, but only if it can be achieved for nothing and, preferably, with a substantial regular cash subvention from Britain.

Can anyone seriously think that Paddy Lane's greedy guts or the fat cats of the Federation of Employers are prepared to foot the bill in taking over dead Northern industries and, more to the point, will dip into their pockets to pay for the North's more expensive social services? Not on your nelly. As it is they grudge every copper given to the poor in Ballymun and Southill. Are they likely, therefore, to be more generous to the Northern Irish poor? Not on your orange nelly. The people in favour of a 32-county republic would disappear overnight if the price to be paid was some of their own, rather than other people's blood; their claret is much too precious.

But should a 32-county Republic be enshrined in our hearts let alone written into our Constitution. I say an emphatic 'No' and that's further than Dr. O'Brien goes. Ireland has never been an entity except under overall British rule. Certainly, a majority in the North does not want to join us and they're not all Unionists: the last time the Catholic-Nationalists were asked to express an opinion 41 per cent of them said they did NOT want to join a united Ireland and 28 per cent of them abstained. Why therefore should we spend time, money and blood forcing a totally distinct tribe or mixture of tribes into the 32-county Catholic state that Dr. Newman envisages. Of course we should drop our claim to the North even if only on the very obvious ground that we are incapable of looking after the 26-county people that providence in a perverse mood entrusted to our care.

If you are inclined to lend an ear to the sirens' song, hesitate and ask yourself how much are you personally prepared to pay in blood and money to follow the new Maid of Orelans, Sile de Valera, into another Boland's Mill (sorry, Barrow Milling Company. The reverse takeover netted millions for the Irish Volunteers of Finance and, of course, put up the price of bread). Moggarlai to you Sile, and take a tutorial from The Cruiser on the speeches of grandpa! He may be able to make more sense out of Dev than I could standing in the rain trying to record his innumerable traunt polysyllables multitudinously twittering like a bee. (General O'Duffy, for all his Niagara of statements, provided brandy so that recorders of history like myself could take the strain. Not so, Dev; one was supposed to enjoy him — neat).

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AT A conference to launch a new book, Economic Activity in Ireland, Professor Brendan Walsh, of the Economic and Social Research Institute, said we are now set for a resumption of emigration because of the growth in population which industry, becoming more capital-intensive, is unable to absorb. He points out that in 1973, for example, the natural growth in population in the Republic was 11 per 1,000, compared with 7 in Northern Ireland and less than 2 per 1,000 in Britain. Professor

Walsh envisaged either a forced emigration for school-leavers because of absence of job opportunities or a "voluntary" emigration by those in work to seek higher real-wages abroad. Professor Walsh did not say where the emigrants will take ship to. It cannot surely be Britain where unemployment is a massive 1,500,000, the worst for 30 years, or the U.S. where there are 12 million out of work — and where they won't accept foreigners anyway. Incidentally, I learn that the Eastern Health Board is experiencing a fresh strain on its meagre resources because of Irish families returning from depressed industrial areas in the English Midlands.

Commonsense might dictate a national family planning campaign. Father Hans Kung, the eminent Catholic theologian who has just concluded a triumphant visit to Dublin, sees nothing wrong with contraception; the French bishops, as I have previously pointed out, accept it as "a lesser evil". Must we wait for the tablets to be handed down from the North Circular Road? Are we indeed bound to? If Dr. Newman would only take time off from political statements that are really not his concern he may tell us what we are to do with our growing population.

Almost anything can be done with words — consider the work of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission's recent rolling back of the Reformation — so Catholics can continue to hope that the Pope will find a formula that both forbids contraception and permits it! With sound advice, Petrine texts, *episcopes*, and all, it can be done; let *nil desperandum* be the slogan for the Irish hierarchy and especially for the North Circular Road!

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AREAS that get only RTE, God help us!, should take heart at what has been happening in Waterford. The Multi-channel Campaign Committee is well on the way to agreeing to a Dail candidate as it seems nothing else will shift either the Coalition or Fianna Fail in their opposition to the re-broadcast of BBC programmes. No need for Limerick to follow this example, excellent though it is. Limerick already has Jim Kemmy, a committed campaigner who won't be put off by Dr. O'Brien's soporifics, no matter how elegantly advanced.

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AFTER a wait of nearly two years I have now been able to buy the freehold of the house I live in. The £18.90 a year ground rent with which it was encumbered cost only £125 to purchase; the costs were an extravagant £75 but this, I was told, was a special price; they would normally have been £125, as much as the rent purchase itself. That reveals a sorry enough state of affairs but, wait for it, the delay in completion arose from the fact that the ground landlord lives abroad. Is he a Leconfield lolling in a club in St. James's, the Athenaeum perhaps? A descendant of the rascal my McInerney grandfather was jailed for taking potshots at? Nothing like that; he is one of the new breed of landlords, a Clareman, and his name is, wait for it, McInerney! He spends his time on the French Riviera. *Plus ca change, plus c'est le meme chose.*

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HAVING defeated, temporarily at any rate, the evil work of the keeled slug, *Milax budapestiensis*, in my efforts to grow my own spuds and other vegetables, I now face a new enemy; the price of seed potatoes, a Department-tested early variety, is £3.60 a stone. At this rate Murphys are going to be real nuggets. I am still, I am proud to tell you, enjoying last year's slug-free crop, last year's saved onions and there are another few weeks' sprouts left. There is, of course, another enemy: it seems that I have to dig all the silly ground again, spread manure on it and collect fresh welts on my hands. And to what purpose? That I can call myself a true Paddy Lane man? Oh, moggarlai!

**PART
25**

**BY
P.J. RYAN**

THE S.S. ARVONIA

By the end of August the Guest Master or Governor of the county gaol found himself with a full house and almost with standing room only for new arrivals. His guests chafed at their inaction and at the restrictions on their liberty. They pined for the great open spaces, and longed for the simple pleasures of home cooked food and homemade cake such as mother makes. As many more guests were expected, it was decided to remove the present incumbents and to give other and more deserving arrivals a rest from their patriotic labours.

Five hundred of the prisoners were marched to the docks and embarked on the passenger ship S.S. Arvonian which left on the tide. The exclusive upper deck of this passenger ship was reserved for the escort of sixty men. The lower deck and steerage was given over to the non-fare paying passengers who were expected to "rough it".

This odyssey of the Arvonian must not be confused with the voyage of the S.S. Lady Wicklow or with the S.S. Slievenamon which also carried prisoners on the Gulf Stream cruise. The Arvonian, old in an age when a ship was not considered old unless creaking at the rivets and her bilge pumps working overtime, sailed slowly down the Shannon. Because of her decrepit engines and extreme old age she kept close inshore so that in an emergency she could be run ashore and grounded on some convenient beach. She moved at the slow speed of seven knots so that the journey to Dublin, which should have taken a snappy two days, was extended to over a week's sunshine cruise around the southern Irish coast.

All day and every day the green Isle of Erin with its fair hills and beaches was in sight, to provoke a pride in patriotic endeavour. Any prisoner on board the Arvonian blessed with good sight and permitted to climb the mainmast where the national flag floated in the sunlight, could see ten miles out to sea, units of the British Navy on patrol guarding the Irish coast. Looking inland he could see "valleys green and towering crag". Those on board, not being blessed with visionary foresight, could not know that those "valleys green and towering crag", as well as those sandy beaches, would one day become the exclusive property of alien, with the benign approval of their Republican masters. Providence concealed from them the future national shame when the peasants would huxter and peddle the blood-stained land to the highest bidder, with the sale confirmed by the super patriots. The Arvonian sailing south on the Gulf Stream with sunshine all day and starry skies at night moved slowly on with the stately grace of a dowager taking a last fond look at her domain, before heading for the scrap yard.

The ozone rich air of the Atlantic enlivened the limbs and excited the minds of the guests on cruise. Old men of thirty smiled at the antics of juveniles of twenty and less, who frolicked and dashed around like children at play. This exuberance of spirit was tolerated by the escort on the upper deck who liked to see their captives enjoying themselves.

Some prisoners skilled in art were blessed with enquiring minds and desiring to test the buoyancy of the many lifebuoys on deck threw some of them over board. Satisfied with the proven buoyancy and seeing them being carried towards the coast, other prisoners joined in the fun, writing "With love to Mother" on the white canvas

The Fourth Siege of Limerick

surface stencilled with "S.S. Arvonian". The captain and crew protested against the loss of buoyancy; the escort threatened to start shooting and the use of lifebuoys as a postal service stopped.

The Arvonian also stopped and the crew, in boats, spent almost four hours collecting the wandering lifebuoys which were making a lively race towards the shore, with the wind and tide in their favour. It is well known that the captain and crew of a ship are always happy to risk their lives and ship, pandering to the whims and caprices of carefree passengers; such diversions make life at sea so interesting. Had these lifebuoys reached the shore their discovery would have caused alarm and fears for the safety of the Arvonian. Many ships would have been diverted from their course in a wide-spread search for survivors from a ship presumed to have been lost at sea. The longest journey must end somewhere, sometime. Columbus, following the sun and sailing West, bumped into a land mass, and discovered the continent of America. The Arvonian, sailing a planned course, reached Dublin Bay and anchored there. The engines were at rest but the bilge pumps were still working.

Most of the prisoners were bronzed and fit after their enforced cruise. About one hundred of them were sea-sick, sick of the sea and sick of patriotic fervour; these were taken ashore in launches and sent home to Mother. This was better than sending messages written on lifebuoys. All other prisoners remained on board for a fortnight while industrious tradesmen, working overtime, prepared simple accommodation for them at Gormanstown Camp in County Meath, far from their homes in the sunny south.

PRISON KEYS

All the prisons in Ireland and Britain are built more or less to a standard plan and are administered in the same routine manner. To get from a cell out into the prison grounds requires six keys, three of them held by a warder and three master keys held by a principal warder for the three locks from the cell to the prison yard. A minimum of four warders are watching the whole routine by day and by night. There are no side doors or wicket gates in the prison walls. The main gate and the door to the Governor's house are the only exits from any British-built prison. Anyone claiming to have escaped from prison with the use of one key and one warder is a humbug. This statement can be confirmed by any ex-prisoner.

The thousands of prisoners held in the internment camps and in the county gaols could obtain instant release by signing on the dotted line to cease all hostile acts against the State. This simple provision required no keys and enabled the State to keep down household expenses. The fewer the prisoners, the less it cost to guard and feed them. Prisoners received parcels of food with homemade cake made by mother. No attempt was made to smuggle in a key in a cake, as all cakes are sliced before being given to a prisoner so that any messages or keys would be detected.

(To be continued)

THE IRISH POST

In the constant talk of 'foreign exploitation' what is often missed is the more constant factor of native exploitation. A pertinent example of the ability of the native to exploit his own with more cunning than the foreigner is the 'Irish Post' newspaper in Britain. Although claiming to be "The Voice of the Irish in Britain" the weekly paper is in fact more the voice of the 'Thick Mick' syndrome of pub-owners and building contractors than it is of the majority of Irish people in that country. The pub-owners and contractors take expensive pages of advertising — and nothing is published which might offend their interests. Thus for years the 'Irish Post' fought shy of examining the 'lump' system upon which many of these gombeen men had grown rich.

It was left to British media such as "The Guardian" to expose much of the racketeering in the building industry. These exposures eventually resulted in the Labour Government bringing in laws which required contractors to pay the social welfare payments of their workers. One immediate result of the new laws was the jailing of several senior executives of the well-known construction firm of Murphy and Sons, based in Highgate. The Murphy firm had grown rich on the contracts to build Catholic schools and churches — and had amassed enormous wealth on the sweated labour of Irish immigrants who were fearful of British bureaucracy and who were easy meat for the 'subbies' who contracted them without Insurance and welfare payments which meant many of them had no compensation for injuries suffered on the job.

The owner of the 'Irish Post' is Brendan Mac Lua, former member of Sinn Fein in Dublin and son of Stephen Mac Lua one of the men who run Provisional Sinn Fein in Co. Clare. With an Irish-born accountant, Tony Beatty, as a co-owner, the paper carries a weekly digest of the news from home, mainly written by 'John Kavanagh' . . . who is in fact, Mac Lua. Indeed the owner of the paper writes many of the pages under different names, to give gullible readers the impression of a professional paper. Most of the 'news' is blatantly lifted from the three Irish daily newspapers, without acknowledgement.

When the 'Irish Post' was launched in Britain in 1970, the Irish had begun to make their mark in many areas of British business. The weekly set about wooing these interests by publishing flattering interviews with some of those who had 'made good'. But the paper also had a basic Republican line which many of those recent entrants to the British capitalist class found slightly embarrassing to be reminded of, such as the former Republican of the '50's who now ran a chain of clubs in North London and had joined the Conservative Party! One person who got a lot of favourable mention in 'The Post' was Charles Gallagher, brother of the infamous Fianna Fail 'Taca' Gallaghers who had got rich in Ireland with lucrative contacts during the business reign of 'The Soldiers of Destiny'. Hardly surprising that another favourite politician of the 'Post' was Charles Haughey.

That combination sums-up much of the paper's uneasy alliance: Mac Lua's traditional Republicanism and his admiration for the 'Rich Paddies' lay side-by-side with the paper's constant condemnation of the Stormont Regime. Now the world knows there was much wrong with the Stormont Administration — but the 'Post's' abuse was often couched in vitriolic language about the Protestant people of Northern Ireland. So much for being 'Republican'.

It was in the area of domestic British politics that the paper's lack of perception was to be most glaringly obvious. In an attempt to make itself politically influential, the 'Post' set about trying to 'sell' the immigrant Irish vote to the Labour Party in the run-up to the British General Election of 1970. An independent survey published at the

time showed that about twenty constituencies could be decided by the Irish vote. So the paper tried to influence the Labour Party to suggesting that the Irish vote could only be counted-on if the Labour Party were to announce a particular attitude on Northern Ireland! What the 'Post' — and Mac Lua — didn't understand was that the future of Northern Ireland was a very marginal issue among the majority of those Irish who voted Labour. Indeed the Labour Party bossed up and down England, Scotland and Wales knew their Irish better than did the so-called 'Voice of the Irish in Britain'. Which is hardly surprising as many of the Labour Party stalwarts came from generations of Irish stock — and had been well absorbed into the indigenous British population. And whatever the merits or demerits of Labour Government policy on the North, it remained largely uninfluenced by the 'Irish Post'.

Having been spurned in his attempts to do a mini-Beaverbrook by the Labour leadership, Mac Lua now turned his attentions to the Tory Party. Through the agency of a Tory councillor in Chelsea, named Paul Dwyer, an approach was made to Conservative Central Office. The Conservatives showed some tentative interest, aware that the working-class Irish vote was mainly Labour. A plan was drawn-up, whereby Conservative candidates would be 'schooled' in Irish customs and traditions, even to the extent of learning the odd Gaelic phrase, such as 'Ta Failte Romhat'. It is impossible to say to what extent that plan affected the return of the Conservative Government in 1970. But we do know that Mac Lua's welcome of the Tories went-up in the gunsmoke of Derry's Bloody Sunday which happened under the Conservative Government.

After that debacle, it was back to the drawing-board of 'Ourselves Alone' with the back-end of the 'Post' carrying its adverts for dance-halls, pubs and contractors — and the small-ads section carrying recruiting adverts for the Provisionals. But even these adverts were dropped like a sweating stick of gelignite when the Provisionals launched their ill-fated bombing campaign in Britain. The Irish population told the 'Post' in no uncertain terms what it thought of its support for the Provisionals. With a speedy sense of commercial self-preservation the paper toned-down its Republican line. (It was one thing to excuse the blowing-up of civilians in Belfast — but excusing it on your own doorstep was another matter, particularly when it could be yourself or a neighbour who got maimed or blasted to bits).

So, having failed to manipulate either of the two major British political parties, having failed to exploit the immigrant Irish for political self-interest, Mac Lua has settled down with the group he most identifies with — the self-made Paddy Whacks of the pubs, clubs and building sites. Most of them vote Tory and Mac Lua himself has recently acquired another bit of the camouflage — an ostentatious Daimler Princess. Meantime one of his long-serving part-time journalists on the paper who writes a column on folk-music is paid the sum of — four pounds a week. Which is one way of showing that if you have to tote around a big car and a lot of failed ambitions, you may as well do it on someone else's back.

LYRIC

*Strange, that the lawn was pink
With petals from the trees,
For it seemed as if a storm
Raged in your talk,
Fierce and cold.
Leaves have gone in storms,
Love dies, yes, as you said,
But the sharp winds you sent
Still blow through my head.*

THE DAINGEAN BOYS

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT
PART ONE

by SEAN BOURKE

It was a cold October morning in 1947. Mr. Justice Gleeson gazed down from his lofty perch on the judicial bench at the three cold, hungry and ragged boys standing huddled together in the well of the court. He spoke to the other two first and there seemed to be some confusion about which of us had done what. I hadn't been with the other lads all the time and they sometimes did things on their own but now we were all charged with everything. Finally the judge turned his attention to me. "Have you anything to say for yourself?" he asked severely. "No, sir", I answered.

He turned to the Superintendent. "It seems to me, Superintendent, they've been doing so much mischief in the streets of Limerick for the past few months that they don't know what they've done and what they haven't done".

"I took the bunch of bananas out of the car, sir", I said weakly.

"I agree with you, Your Honour", the Superintendent answered, ignoring me. "They seem to have lost track of what they did". He smiled as he spoke.

The worst part of it was the turmoil within, the conflict of inexplicable feelings. Was it possible for a twelve-year-old boy to stand here and not care what happened to him? Was it natural? The streets outside were so hateful to me I knew deep down I did not want to go back to them. But how could I *want* to be sent away? Oh God, help me to understand! These are not the thoughts and feelings of a young boy. I cannot *want* to go away and yet I do. Please, Justice, please don't send me away! If I could only *understand*. Why do I *want* to go? Oh God, tell me why I feel this way...

The young boy was standing in the middle of the playground at Sexton Street. It was the mid-morning break and he was surrounded by a hundred other boys laughing and pushing. The tears were streaming down his face hot and large and hurried as if they were impatient to escape till it seemed they must leave, river beds behind them. The schoolmaster was Lefty Kelly and he had the boy's left arm gripped tightly with his right hand and his knuckles

stood out big and white. He had a long thick round stick in his left hand and was tapping it against the side of his lame leg in time to the rhythm of his words.

"How-many-times-does-nine-go-into-eighty-one?" he shouted. He wasn't angry at all and smiled all the time.

"Eight t...t...times, sir", the boy sobbed.

Lefty Kelly threw his head back and laughed. "Did ye hear that, lads?" he demanded, looking around at the sea of young faces. "We did, sir", some of them answered. He turned back to the sobbing boy. "I'll teach you to do your homework, boy!" He shifted his weight away from his lame leg. "Hold out your hand!" The boy slowly stretched his hand out and closed his eyes tightly and for the tenth time Lefty Kelly, still smiling, brought the heavy stick down on the bruised palm.

Brother Andrews, the Head Brother, was standing over near the wall with three other brothers and two of the schoolmasters, Spud Murphy and Mousey Danagher, were with them. And they were all laughing at Lefty Kelly and the boy. The boy's hand was turned blue and was all swollen up but Lefty Kelly kept hitting it with the stick till the boys knees started bending with the weight and the pain and the shame...

Justice Gleeson's voice sounded far away, as if in a dream. "I don't see what else I can do, Superintendent. I'll have to send them to Daingean".

DAINGEAN! The word was like a sword thrust. **DAINGEAN!** The times we had talked about it and laughed about it and joked about it. And heard about it from boys who had been there. **DAINGEAN!** Would he really send us there?

Fully awake now, hanging on his every word. He shuffled the papers decisively into a neat bundle in front of him. Not Daingean! Oh God, please God, not Daingean!

"I am committing all three of you to Daingean for a period of three years each!"

I looked at the other two. They didn't seem to be distressed. Perhaps it wasn't just me. But surely they couldn't want to be sent away too? It wasn't right. It wasn't natural. Nobody could have thoughts like mine, feel the way I did. It was a curious elation that came over me and completely enveloped me as I walked from the court with the two policemen.

The other two boys would not be leaving for Daingean for another week so I would be making the journey on my own. Four hours in a cell in William Street Barracks to wait for the three o'clock train to Tullamore in Offaly. My mother called at dinner time with a can of tea and I drank it out of the lid as I ate the bread and jam sandwiches. She stood in the middle of the cold, damp cell watching me, and then she cired. "You'll have no mother by the time you get back! Oh God, you'll have no mother!" I didn't cry and I wondered if she was puzzled by my silence. I was glad to be leaving Limerick.

A young policeman in civilian clothes with a white belted raincoat collected me from the cell at half past two and told me that he would be escorting me to Daingean.

As we sat in the third-class carriage at Limerick Station I could see my mother making her way along the platform and looking in all the windows of the train to see where I was. When she found me she reached in and handed me two bars of chocolate. The train started to move and she cried again and said something but I couldn't hear her words above the noise of the hissing steam and the chugging engine.

"Would you like a piece of chocolate?" I said to the policeman as we approached Limerick Junction. He smiled.

HUMAN LEECHES

In the "Good Old Days" chemists kept leeches for the purpose of sucking "bad blood" from unfortunates who were afflicted with this condition. Today people cannot be blamed for wondering if the chemists have changed places with the leeches as the members of this profession enjoy the neverending feast of money from prescriptions presented by their customers.

Doctors prescribe proprietary brands of medicines, i.e. tonics, pills, cough mixtures, etc., written on prescription forms in indecipherable hieroglyphics. All the chemist has to do is to hand an article to his customer and he can automatically charge over 50% more for it than if that person had asked for the same medicine by word of mouth, that is if the customer had named the required item!

Just one example of this outrageous injustice regularly takes place in the selling of a tonic called "Verdiviton" which, if purchased on prescription, costs £1.45, but if ordered by name costs 93p.

How is the 52p carved up? Are the doctors in cohorts with the chemists? Are the chemists in cohorts with the Department of Health?

These are questions of serious public concern. They should be answered.

"Thanks very much", he said. "I didn't have time to get anything myself".

That curious feeling of elation came over me again. I was glad to be leaving the claustrophobic poverty of Limerick and the mindless cruelty of Sexton Street. I would hate those Christian Brothers till my dying day.

We got off the train at Tullamore and walked to the police barracks, where my escort made enquiries about how to get to the village of Daingean where St. Conleth's Reformatory School was situated. The station sergeant got us a taxi and we wet out on the last lap of our journey. Dusk was falling as we drove through the flat, dull boglands of Offaly. We passed through the village of Ballynagar and finally arrived at Daingean (known as Philipstown in the days of the British) at seven o'clock that night.

The car pulled up near the stone bridge over the Grand Canal and the driver spoke to a passing villager. "Could you tell us where the . . . er . . . Industrial School is?" he asked, choosing his words out of politeness to me. The villager frowned. "You mean the reformatory?" he said. He

pointed to a high stone wall on the other side of the bridge close by the canal. "That's it", he said. We crossed the bridge and drove through the iron gates.

The part of St. Conleth's school visible to the public gaze on the other side of the gates was a two-storey, symmetrical building consisting of three wings that embraced well-tended lawns. The main wing faced the gates and the other two wings were connected to it at right angles and faced each other across the expanse of lawns, so that the entire building resembled a giant letter E with the centre bar missing.

The driveway up to the main door was interrupted by a large marble plinth surmounted by a statue of St. Conleth. The car weaved round to the left of the statue in a semi-circular motion and then straightened out and went on for another twenty yards before coming to a halt.

I got out with the policeman and we stood for a moment on the gravelled driveway. I glanced back towards the gate but it was already hidden by the winter darkness and the bogland mist. Then the policeman nodded at the big solid door. "This is it", he said. "Let's go in".

(To be continued).

THE DUBLIN LEFT

LETTER TO
THE EDITOR

Just recently I was sent a copy of your October issue containing an article on "The Dublin Left". This was mainly aimed at an article of mine which appeared as a letter in the "Irish Times". In this I attempted to put forward perspectives for the development of the class struggle in this country over the coming years.

First some general points. While welcoming criticisms of my ideas because discussion within the working class movement is essential if ideas and perspectives are to be clarified, I believe however that it is a very incomplete discussion which confines itself to criticism of the opponents views and put forward no alternative of its own. This is precisely what you did in your article. If my "Marxist Scenario" is incorrect, then I would like to be able to see this and correct any mistakes I might be making. But to be convinced I am wrong it is necessary to sketch out in exactly what I am wrong, giving historical and factual backing to your arguments, and also, and most importantly, spell out what scenario will develop as opposed to the one that I put forward. Before I make some points relating to specific criticisms in your article I must point out that I believe much of the innuendo in your article starts from a very reactionary basis. "The Dublin Left". First the "Militant Irish Monthly", the paper whose political position I support, has supporters in Belfast, Ballymena, Derry, Strabane, Coleraine, Galway and Dublin.

But this is not the main point. The innuendo is similar to the type with which individuals like James Tully, right wing Labour T.D., whip up parochial antagonism to those who put forward left wing ideas in the Labour Party by pointing to their mainly Dublin-based branches and uses the extremely reactionary country against city prejudices which lurk in our consciousness and which all socialists must fight against. Finally on the last paragraph, which you could have taken up with your alternative, is instead a series of slanders. I am neither a "Pseudo-intellectual, a slogan monger (nor a) dullard". I am a worker who, as a socialist, is attempting to hammer out a clear perspective on how I can play a role in changing society and building a new society within which poverty, alienation and insecurity can be banished.

From this point of view I now pose some points in reply to your article. You agree in your second paragraph with my analysis of the "unlikelihood of an informed working class supporting either of the two parties . . ." meaning Fianna Fail and Fine Gael. You then go on to ridicule the idea that they will turn to the Labour Party.

Especially you state that my analysis that the ranks of the unions will put pressure on the Labour Party is false. At the last Workers Union of Ireland conference a resolution was passed to hold a special conference to discuss the Coalition and this came from a resolution to the conference calling for Labour to break the Coalition and fight on socialist policies. This is just one instance of how things will develop in the future.

In the 1960's when the process of industrialisation was taking place in the 26 Counties and the working class was growing in strength, when strikes were numerous as workers fought to increase wages, this upswing in the class struggle was reflected in the Labour Party. Many of the major unions affiliated and a fresh layer of young workers flooded into the Labour Party. Jim Kemmy was then in the Party and was part of this process. The Party was also driven to the left under this impact. Of course the 1970 Coalition decision led to disillusionment and a large exodus of the left wing and most of the youth. Undoubtedly the most political workers and youth saw the action of the Party as a sellout. Yet one important fact remains. No alternative has been built. Many attempts have been made. They have all failed. The most political workers have lapsed back into relative political inactivity and neither are the youth playing any active role at present.

Two questions are posed by these developments. One is why have all the attempts to build an alternative failed to get off the ground? In fact all the small groupings that exist outside the Labour Party are marked by one characteristic: they have no base in the working class. Also they have shrunk and split over the past years. Surely if your position was correct there would be emerging a new Party drawing more and more from the ranks of the most political workers and youth. The second and related question is that if, as you claim, the working class when it "awakens", to use your term, does not move to the Labour Party then where will they move?

In your article you also point to my alledged "lack of understanding of human psychology" and you go on to state that "an awakened working class will not give its support to a party that has consistently betrayed it since the foundation of the state . . .". I'll let history make my arguments. The awakening layer of workers and youth in this country in the 1960's moved to the Labour Party. Its record at this time was if anything even worse than now as at that time it did not even have the tradition which is

Continued over

Continued from page 7.

now part of its heritage of the 1967 to 1969 period and the 1969 policy documents. Let me go further afield. In Spain the working class are moving into action and they are moving into the Socialist Party and the Communist Party. Recent polls have indicated that the Socialist Party would get approximately 50% of the vote in an election and the Communist Party 10 to 15%. Both these parties betrayed the Spanish workers, if we can again use your term, in the Spanish Civil War. In France, the workers are moving to the Communist and Socialist parties, both of whom, especially the former, betrayed them in the 1968 May/June events.

I could go on. Britain is the nearest example, but let us consider the run up to the Russian Revolution. In 1912 the Bolsheviks had the support of four-fifths of the working class. Yet, when the explosive events of the 1917 February revolution created the soviets, in the initial period up until the months of September and October, the mass of the newly awakened working class and the toiling masses supported not the Bolsheviks but the Mensheviks and the Social revolutionaries. This was true also in Petrograd and in Moscow amongst the industrial proletariat. The awakened masses went in the first throes of the revolution precisely to the parties which showed no way forward. No, comrade, I believe my understanding of human psychology is superior to yours and I believe that this is so because, as a Marxist, I attempt to study the history of the working class movement both internationally and nationally and study this history not with glasses tinted with bitterness of past experience when personal illusions were abruptly shattered.

There are many points I would like to make but space is the problem. One last one. You talk with an air of disbelief of a Labour Party with 67 seats. Just recently in Quebec the Parti Quebecois went in one election from 6 seats to just under 70. In 1916 Sinn Fein was a sect and in 1918 it was the largest party in the country. The

question of a party's support is in the main a question of the events which take place in society as a whole. If my perspective is correct, then the question I must answer is why Labour did not get this support in the past or, to be more precise, what is different in the present situation that leads me to this analysis.

Firstly, 26 County society is in a new historical period. It is now an industrial country, with a new layer of skilled and industrial workers whose expectations are high and whose children are now entering the labour market. Emigration is no longer an escape valve as mass unemployment is now a feature of all industrial countries in Western society and will remain so. The population will increase explosively over the next years and these factors all operate at a time of the worst economic crisis in world capitalism since the 1930's and in Irish capitalism since the state was formed. This is an explosive mixture which will result in tremendous struggles of the organised trade union movement and these struggles will come into conflict more and more with the state.

Out of this situation the Coalition arrangement will break and Labour will be pushed to the left. When this happens the most politically advanced workers and youth will flock to the Party's ranks. The process of 1967 to 1969 will be taken up again but this time the movement of the advanced layers will be even greater. At the same time Fianna Fail and Fine Gael will be forced to the right as their pay masters will demand more and more repressive attacks on the working class. The polarisation which will open up in society will most likely lead to the election of a majority Labour Government. One thing is definite and that is that it is within the trade unions and the Labour Party that the main struggle for ideas and for a perspective will take place. Socialists who remain outside the mass organisations of the working class, and these are the trade unions, the Labour Party and the tenants associations, will remain isolated.

JOHN THRONE

(John Casey will reply to this letter in our March edition).

The Mule Theory

BY SEAN HEALY

The Capitalist class learn many a theory
from their stooges, who are never weary,
to trot out any trash for cash;
now, the theory they prefer, when desirous to deter
their workers seeking increased wages,
(of course, quoting their profoundest sages)
is, 'evolution from the mule is the lot and rule
of every fool born to the working class',
obviously they prefer their mules enmasse;
but the theory that they hate,
is evolution from the ape,
who tends to imitate;
for if we aped our masters,
there would be no end to dividend disasters,
who then would be so daft,
to volunteer to do hard graft?

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DEMOCRACY?

SIR — If the times were less tragic, we might relish Bishop Newman's sense of black comedy in marking Church Unity Octave by delivering a triumphalist sermon to a captive Limerick congregation. Not for the first time, he expresses a 'no surrender' attitude which, when articulated by some Northern Protestants, we are so quick to recognise and condemn as bigoted intransigence. All Irishmen, to be sure, have natural rights' but Catholics, he implies, are more equal than Protestants, and Christians, in turn, more equal than 'secularists'.

But the most ominous implications of his views lie in the following passage: "There is a tendency to overlook the fact that even in a 32-county Ireland Catholics would continue to be in a majority. It is not unreasonable to expect that this fact should be kept in mind if only in the name of democracy".

When we remember the Bishop's repeated assertion that Catholics are entitled to a "supportive framework" from the State, it becomes clear that his crude concept of "democracy" is, quite simply, the supremacy of a denominational majority. What else is this but the ugly Hibernian mirror image of Orangeism?

JOHN A. MURPHY

("Cork Examiner" 25/1/77).

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